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The Ramones film End of the Century looks back at the group with humour and darkness. Also in stores are classic archival performances from the likes of Bob Marley, and vibrant new video art from Beck and Kanye West

Hey ho, let's go ... back in time

Here's a roundup of some recently released music and comedy DVDs, prepared by Gazette entertainment writers.

The Ramones

End of the Century: The Story of the Ramones
Rhino Home Video

★★★★★ Poised to take its place among the great rock documentaries, this funny, dark chronicle of the career and times of the Ramones arrives on DVD packed with extras. Clem Burke talks about his blink-and-miss-it career as Elvis Ramone, Joey Ramone takes a shot at Bruce Springsteen in a radio appearance, Marky Ramone demonstrates how tough it really is to be in the drummer's seat, and Tommy Ramone tries with mixed results to tell us who wrote what on the group's first three classic albums. Extra interview footage with the group members and other commentators adds even more fun. It's a must-have for anyone who loves the group. Actually, make that anyone who loves rock 'n' roll.
BERNARD PERUSSE

Bob Marley and the Wailers

Live! At the Rainbow
Island

★★★★★ The sound of Aston (Family Man) Barrett's bone-rattling bass in 5.1 Surround is the sound of reggae heaven in this beautifully recorded performance by Marley and band at London's Rainbow Theatre in 1977. Fanatics and casual admirers alike will find a perfect document of Marley's onstage electricity, along with a set list that hits many high points and still allows room for the musicians to stretch. Finally out on DVD, it's available in two versions: a single-disc edition highlighting the concert and a double disc that also contains Caribbean Nights, the excellent 1988 documentary on Marley's life. Both versions contain bonus footage and interviews that are predictably excessive in their reverence. In the end, it's the live show that will keep you coming back.
BERNARD PERUSSE

Morrissey

Who Put the 'M' in Manchester?
Sanctuary/ Attack

★★★★ This live document of the tour promoting last year's excellent You Are the Quarry is supplemented by a decent helping of extras, including more live footage and four videos. With powerful support from a committed-sounding band, the reliably cheerless Mozz truly delivers here, with a beautifully sequenced and well-recorded set that combines new material with other samplings from his solo career and some Smiths favourites. It's also fascinating to watch huge crowds of adoring fans reach out so desperately to a man whose mega-success in Britain never quite translated here. Seeing the band members stop playing and leave the stage one by one during show closer There Is a Light That Never Goes Out is a highlight of this solid effort.
BERNARD PERUSSE

Beck

Guero
Interscope/Universal

★★★½ Here's something to change your concept of music videos. Beck recruits visual artist D-Fuse (who was to perform last night at Montreal's Elektra festival, and takes part in the festival's 1024 Design in Motion panel today) to create a surround-sound video-art version of his new Guero album. What you get is not run-of-the-mill music videos. Abstract digital imagery is used on its own or with snapshots, traffic images and buildings. Visuals are intuitively co-ordinated with the music, with completely different styles for each song. This is amazingly fun, refreshing, creative and not likely to be played on a music video channel near you anytime soon. Limited edition DVD includes regular CD and booklet of lyrics and pics.
TCHA DUNLEVY

D-Fuse takes part in Elektra's Design in Motion panel, today at 2 p.m. at Place des Arts's Cinquième Salle. Tickets cost $12. Call (514) 842-2112. For more on Elektra, go to www.elektrafestival.ca.

Kanye West

The College Dropout Video Anthology
Island Def Jam/Universal

★★★½ Last year's hip-hop revelation Kanye West releases a video "anthology," which is really just six videos – eight if you count all three totally different versions of Jesus Walks. There's also a moderately interesting hour-long making of segment on the Jesus Walks trilogy. West's appeal is in his down-to-earth persona, his humour and willingness to tackle issues, from religion (Jesus Walks) to materialism (All Falls Down). The DVD also includes Through the Wire, Slow Jamz (with Jamie Foxx), the topical, beautifully shot Two Words (with Mos Def and Freeway) and an extended video for The New Workout Plan. A bonus CD features various remixes.
TCHA DUNLEVY

The Boomtown Rats

Live at Hammersmith Odeon 1978
Eagle Rock

★★½ Sometimes it's good to be reminded that venerable members of the rock establishment were once hungry and passionate. Here's a chance to see Sir Bob Geldof before I Don't Like Mondays, before Live Aid and before he became musically irrelevant. Prancing and preening around the stage like a 1965 version of fellow knight Mick Jagger, Geldof leads the Rats through overdrive mini-anthems like Eat Trap and She's So Modern. While the 51-minute concert film never skimps on energy, the songs are hit-and-miss and the camerawork is occasionally goofy. As for the bonus material, the two audio-only tracks from the show are fine, but the videos for two dull solo Geldof songs from 2001 graphically illustrate his decline.
BERNARD PERUSSE

Classic Albums Series

Nirvana: Nevermind
Simply Red: Stars
Motörhead: Ace of Spades
Eagle Vision

Nirvana: ★★★★; *Simply Red:* ★★; *Motörhead:* ★★ Eagle's recent releases of superb documentaries about Electric Ladyland, American Beauty, The Band, Rumours and Graceland proved that the Classic Albums series can be fascinating, whether your initial interest is casual or obsessive. With surviving musicians and producers returning to the studio to reminisce, twiddle the knobs, deconstruct songs and tell stories, most instalments have been magical fly-on-the-wall experiences. This latest batch tests the quality control. While Nevermind is a slam-dunk entry, with engaging commentary from Dave Grohl, Krist Novoselic and Butch Vig, selecting the Simply Red and Motörhead albums for hall-of-fame status is a more questionable decision – at least on this side of the Atlantic. No question: A little Lemmy sure goes a long way.
BERNARD PERUSSE

Elvis Costello and the Imposters

Club Date: Live in Memphis
Eagle Vision

★★★★ Costello was in full-on rocker mode when he took over a small Memphis club to promote last fall's The Delivery Man. In the intimate setting of the Hi Tone Café, he alternated the new disc's tough, soulful tracks with old favourites, picking liberally from his early catalogue and bringing Emmylou Harris on for five songs. The main bonus feature, a film of Costello and drummer Pete Thomas on a lengthy road trip to historic music sites in and near Memphis, is a treat, with the two chatting up a storm about musical history. The DVD, which is almost three hours long, also features songs cut from the main concert film and a brief account of the rush on tickets for this rare occasion.
BERNARD PERUSSE

Ella Fitzgerald / Dizzy Gillespie Sextet

Live at Montreux 1969
Norman Granz' Jazz in Montreux
Eagle Eye Media

Ella Fitzgerald: ★★★★; *Dizzy Gillespie Sextet:* ★★★ When 1940s jazz producer Norman Granz founded Pablo Records in the '70s, he provided a refuge for bebop greats at a time when jazz-rock had steamrollered what's now called "classic jazz." Artists like Dizzy Gillespie and Ella Fitzgerald found renewed life in Europe, epitomized by adoring concerts staged at the Montreux Jazz Festival, the continent's largest. The artists are gone, but video from their shows remains, and the stellar sound virtually puts the listener in a front row seat. This is not whiz-bang video; the camera is patient and unobtrusive, and the editing goes with the flow rather than deconstructing it. The Gillespie set features vibraphonist Milt Jackson (of the Modern Jazz Quartet) and bassist Ray Brown reprising their glory years of 30 years earlier. (Their wide-lapel disco-era fashions strangely echo drape-shapes of the '40s.) Fitzgerald's set from 1969 is in black and white, and her demure, almost shy manner on an intimate circular stage gives this package genuine poignancy. Backed by pianist Tommy Flanagan – the "jazz poet" who's featured on his own DVD in the Granz series – she displays a mixture of innocent wonder and unassuming wisdom.
JUAN RODRIGUEZ

John Pinette

I Say Nay Nay
Nine Yards Records (import)

★★★½ It takes a little work, but if you're a fan of John Pinette you can get his latest DVD online. (It's available at www.amazon.ca.) I Say Nay Nay, taped in Arizona last summer, will be familiar to the thousands of Montreal fans who thrilled to his one-man show at the Just for Laughs festival of 2004. Fat, funny and a gifted mimic, Pinette performs material that loses nothing in repeat viewings. Jokes on salads, his Munchkins-meet-The Exorcist "Get out of the line" routine, and his water park and gym experiences are pants-wettingly funny every time. The only downside is the quality of the 69-minute DVD, which looks like it was done on your brother's video cam. Bonus features include an appearance on Fox's Sunday Night Comics in 1992 when he was 100 pounds heavier.
ANNE SUTHERLAND

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